

## 6. The Royal Love Song (2Q 2019—Family Seasons)

**Biblical material:** Song of Solomon; Gen. 2:7; 1 Cor. 7:3–5; John 17:3; 1 John 1:9; Rom. 1:24–27; Gal. 5:24; Song of Solomon 8:6.

### Quotes

- Sexuality throws no light upon love, but only through love can we learn to understand sexuality. *Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy*
- In matters of sexuality we are at present, every one of us, ill or well, nothing but hypocrites. *Sigmund Freud*
- To live in marriage is a responsible way to live in sexuality, as to live in a household is a responsible way to live in the world. One cannot enact or fulfill one's love for womankind or mankind, or even for all the women or men to whom one is attracted. If one is to have the power and delight of one's sexuality, then the generality of instinct must be resolved in a responsible relationship to a particular person. *Wendell Berry*
- Love is giving up control. It's surrendering the desire to control the other person. The two—love and controlling power over the other person—are mutually exclusive. If we are serious about loving someone, we have to surrender all the desires within us to manipulate the relationship. *Rob Bell*
- If we're not intentional about pursuing God's best for our marriages, and grasping the tremendous role intimacy plays in that relationship, what was intended to be deeply enjoyed - a passionate, life-giving love affair... alight with laughter, fiercely protected, and drenched in freedom - becomes a stuffy, awkward thing to be endured. *Joy McMillan*
- The proof of spiritual maturity is not how pure you are but awareness of your impurity. That very awareness opens the door to grace. *Philip Yancey*
- There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread. *Mother Teresa*
- We find rest in those we love, and we provide a resting place in ourselves for those who love us. *Bernard of Clairvaux*
- We can only learn to love by loving. *Iris Murdoch*

### Questions

How do you relate to this love-poem being part of Scripture, God's Word? What does the inclusion of this book in the holy canon say about the kind of person God is? How come that in the history of the church that physical intimacy became shameful? How is sex portrayed today, and what does this tell us about ourselves and our God?

### Bible summary

There is much material here in addition to the whole of the Song of Solomon. Since this should be the primary focus in this week's lesson, we will concentrate on that here.

“Come then, my love; my darling, come with me. The winter is over; the rains have stopped; in the countryside the flowers are in bloom. This is the time for singing; the song of

doves is heard in the fields. Figs are beginning to ripen; the air is fragrant with blossoming vines. Come then, my love; my darling, come with me.” Song of Songs 2:10-13 (TEV).

Would you say no to this invitation? What a delightful thought: to discover together the joy of life, to hear the sound of music in your beloved’s voice, to join your whole being with his in the delight of God’s love. Couples reading to one another the Song that Solomon wrote is truly moving, the more so when you realize that this is God’s plan for us!

Take another look at the Song of Solomon (all quotes from TEV): “Your lips cover me with kisses; your love is better than wine. There is a fragrance about you; the sound of your name recalls it. No woman could keep from loving you. Take me with you, and we’ll run away...” The Woman (1:2-4). “How beautiful you are my love; how your eyes shine with love!” The Man (1:15). “I am weak from passion. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand caresses me.” The Woman (2:5, 6). “Come then, my love; my darling, come with me.” The Man (2:10). “My lover is mine, and I am his.” The Woman (2:16). “How beautiful you are, my love! Your eyes shine with love... your hair dances... your teeth are white... your lips are like a scarlet ribbon... your cheeks glow... your neck is like the tower of David, round and smooth... your breasts are like gazelles... how perfect you are! The Man (4:1-7). Here, as Scripture, is a celebration of intense, physical human love. Under the inspiration of God, this is part of the Bible—what do we make of it? Are we still embarrassed, or can we see God celebrating the beauty of physical love in the right relationship?

### **Comment**

For some, the fact that the Song of Solomon is included in Scripture is somewhat distasteful since it deals rather graphically with the expression of intimate love-making. But the truth is that we are God’s creation, made to enjoy the pleasures of love in all its component parts—mental, physical, and spiritual—in the committed relationship of marriage. While some church fathers sought to make it more allegorical than real, the Song of Solomon is a celebration of the deep love shared as husband and wife.

This should tell us much about God’s true intentions when he created man and woman and placed them in the Garden. While sin and the Devil have marred God’s gift of sexuality, its origins are in the purity and completeness of God’s creation. We were made to experience the pleasure and delight of giving oneself totally to the other. That is why all other forms of sexuality miss the point—their focus is on the satisfaction of selfish desire, not on the delight in giving love to the other.

The challenge today is how to recapture the original intent. Recognizing that God placed the Song of Solomon in the Bible with a purpose, how can we use this as a way to come back from the dark paths of sin? As in everything, God seeks to be redemptive. He is not judging and condemning, but seeking to win us back. He sees that in our sinful state we are lost, and cannot help ourselves, so he reaches out to us to heal and transform us, to recreate us in his image once more. This applies to the most intimate aspects of our lives just as importantly as to any other area.

So let’s be honest. We all need healing here; we all need God’s intervention to help us truly love in the way he intended. So what went wrong?

Like all of God’s gifts to us, sex can be abused and misused. This has happened all too often, perhaps because it *is* so powerful. But this doesn’t mean that it should be a taboo subject, whispered about and treated as something “dirty.” It really is an offense to God to

throw such a precious gift back in His face and treat it as something unclean and unwholesome.

How do such beliefs come about? While such situations are not due to any one cause, the teachings of the church over many years have certainly not helped. See what these famous church fathers believed:

Augustine said that “a woman is a temple built on a sewer.”

Tertullian wrote about women like this: “The judgment of God upon your sex endures even today; and with it inevitably endures your position of criminal at the bar of justice. You are the gateway to the devil.”

Chrysostom recorded his opinion: “Woman: a foe to friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary evil.”

Origen was so convinced that sex was evil that he castrated himself. The great medieval theologian Thomas a Kempis concluded that “Spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world and all the pleasures of the flesh.”

Perhaps we should not blame these leaders too strongly. They were following beliefs popular in their own society. These beliefs included the idea that there was a pure soul locked inside an evil body. So everything the body did was sinful.

In today’s world where sexual extremes define our societies, we need to see again that the gift of sexuality expressed in the way it was intended is God’s great gift to us, and speaks so much about the kind of person he is—one that understands us, made us to experience pleasure, and delights in the love we can have for each other.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Our affection for one another springs from our common relation to God. We are one family, we love one another as He loved us. When compared with this true, sanctified, disciplined affection, the shallow courtesy of the world, the meaningless expression of effusive friendship, are as chaff to the wheat...

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks... Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases its fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others...

Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven... Let each give love rather than exact it. {1MCP 211}

Not only does God require you to control your thoughts, but also your passions and affections. . . . Passion and affection are powerful agents...Positively guard your thoughts, your passions, and your affections. Do not degrade these to minister to lust. Elevate them to purity, devote them to God. {1MCP 218-9}

Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love, are neither unreasonable nor blind. The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward. {FLB 255.3}